when they are implemented and determine the course of action accordingly.

Visit of Russian delegation

3899. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Russia delegation visited India in the 1st week of February, 2002;

(b) if so, the subjects of mutual interest discussed with them;

(c) the agreement reached during the visit and other details in this regard; and

(d) the assistance expected therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Mr. Igor Ivanov visited India on 3-4 February, 2002. Then Deputy Chairman (Deputy Prime Minister) of the Government of the Russian Federation Mr. Ilya Klebanov visited India from 5-8 February, 2002.

(b) to (d) Mr. Igor Ivanov held detailed discussions with the External Affairs Minister on a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues. An Indo-Russian Joint Statement was signed by the two Foreign Ministers and issued at the end of this visit. Mr. Ivnov also had a separate meeting with Raksha Mantri Mr. George Fernandes.

During the visit of Mr. Ilya Klebanov, the Eighth Session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC) and the Second Session of the Indo-Russian Inter Governmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation were held. Protocols were signed at the end of both these meetings. Mr. Klebanov also called on the President and Prime Minister of India. He met with the External Affairs Minister and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and National Security Advisor.

During all these meetings, the two sides undertook a comprehensive review of bilateral relations between India and the Russian Federation in trade, economic, scientific, technological, cultural and defence spheres. Both sides expressed their satisfaction over the positive developments in cooperation between the two countries in recent years in all these areas.

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

3900. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India expressed its shock and outrage at the United States decision to oppose seven years of sustained efforts to cobble a multilateral protocol to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention;

(b) if so, whether this led to collpase of the talks among 144 countries;

(c) whether India has declared US move as unacceptable;

(d) if so, whether India was among 143 countries that worked hard to arrive at the BTWC protocol; and

(e) Government's reaction on the US stand on this issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (e) On 25 July 2001, during the last scheduled meeting of the Ad hoc Group set up in 1994 to negotiate a Verification Protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the US Government stated that, after an internal review, it had come to the conclusion that the mechanisms envisioned for the Protocol would not achieve their objectives, that no modification of them would allow them to achieve their objectives, and that trying to do more would simply raise the risk to legitimate United States activities. Though the US Government also said that it intended to explore other ideas and alternative approaches in the coming months, this announcement implied an end to the work of the Ad hoc Group.